

The Rout Report



Into the Convention of Death went the mighty 126. Oktoberfest was the name of the valley, and the killer was ASL. Actually, there were other ugly critters in the valley of gaming death. Death in this case being the destruction of all non-gaming signs of life in the infected little guy. That is, you.

The End, Fall, 1995

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The Third Bridge Story

Killer CG spends most of 90's in closet!

No Game company can approach its lethal heat!

If you look at old issues of the Rout, you'll see that a certain project called Third Bridge first gets mention years ago. Years and years. In one of the first year's issues, in fact. 1991. That was the year Eric Baker and Kurt Martin sat down and wrote something that had natural appeal - the British paras vs. the SS at the Arnhem bridge.

So what the heck has happened to keep this thing out of the hands of players for so long? Well, here's the whole story, in condensed form. And it's not over yet, since you STILL don't have TB in your rule book. And it still ain't clear how yer gonna get it.

Winter 1991 - First rules write. Eric Baker and Kurt Martin write simple CG using existing boards and a couple of new overlays. They figure to sell it to fanatics for \$5 - cost.

Summer of 1991 - Re-write and playtest. It's simple but cool.

Fall of 1991 - 1st notice in Rout

Talk about it at ASLOK 91

Winter 1992 - TB is about ready. 2nd notice in Rout

Spring 1992 - Evil letter from AH - "You can't sell TB to anyone or we'll sue. But maybe we'll print it eventually."

Rest of 1992 - We think about it. Keep going to work. Eric moves to Oklahoma.

Talk about it at ASLOK 92

Winter 1993 - 2nd re-write and letters to AH. TB is now on a historical map with scenarios and more detail. AH is not on fire about the idea.

Talk about it at ASLOK 93

Fall 1993 - Rex Martin outlines small CG plans for ASL. TB is a natural.

January 1994 - Submit to AH

Winter 1994 - Nothing happens for a while

Spring 1994 - Rex leaves AH

Summer 1994 - Gary Fortenberry joins AH

September 1994 - 50th Anniversary of battle passes

Talk about it at ASLOK 94

Fall 1994 - God Save The King is released, a home-grown Arnhem CG. It's less than the first draft of TB...

Winter 1995 - Send new version to Gary

Nothing happens for a while

Summer 1995 - 3rd re-write. TB is now intricately researched and detailed; a full-blown CG with a very accurate map. It might be the best HASL yet...

1995 Annual mentions it, along with Mud&Blood. But AH has no rights to TB...

Summer ends

Another anniversary of the battle passes.

Oktoberfest comes around again

At any rate, TB is just one product for ASL, and there's already GSTK, so what's the big deal? Well, TB is cool. Unlike GSTK, it's well-researched, it's detailed, it's got cool scenarios, it's gritty. It's like the ASL you're used to buying. And it's just waiting...

So we'll see. Maybe some Jonny-come-lately company will decide to buy ASL and make all sorts of stuff for it. Maybe not. Maybe AH will get it up again. Prolly not.

Rant And Rout One More Time

Kurt Martin

Annual

Hey, the Rout ended up looking good in that 1995 Annual, what with many of our scenarios seeing print therein and mentions of The Turd Bridge and all. Strange to see Rout things thusly legitimized.

Iwo guy

I was coming back from a business trip last month, just settling into a shortish flight back from Florida. A glance over my shoulder at the very full cabin of the wide body I was in brought a older guy sitting just behind me to my attention. ASL has only heightened my awareness of WWII vet age men, and this guy not only fit that profile, he had the old Iwo Jima book, Code of Valor on his lap.

"That's a good book," I said, giving him a nod. "I just re-read it recently." This was really a reference to going back to it to finish off a scenario for the Olympics. He nodded.

"I'm not too far along yet." He didn't seem happy about the book.

I finished my glance around the cabin and turned back to my work.

A short while later, toward the end of the flight, I turned back to see if he was still reading. I was dying to ask him about why he was reading it, but I'm not very pushy in that kind of situation.

I saw he was sitting in the same position, still reading, but with the book at a funny angle in his lap, as if it smelled strange.

"How's the book," I asked in what I hoped was a friendly tone.

"Hard to read" he answered. "Lots of memories."

He was being cryptic in a crabby old man sort of way, but I could tell he at least half wanted to tell me about it. On a hunch, I continued.

"Were you there?" I asked. He nodded.

"What division?"

"5th Division, 27th Regiment, 3rd Battalion," he responded, heavily.

"I guess 50 years doesn't seem like such a long time ago."

"It's not how long it's been, it's how long I was there" he countered, and here I could sense that he hated me asking, but wanted to tell more if I was willing.

"Did you go all the way" I asked, referring to the rare accomplishment of staying in the Marine lines from L-Day until the island was truly secure.

"No. 15 days."

I shook my head. 15 days was a very long time on Iwo, where a tiny percentage of the line infantry (3%) made it from one end of the island to the other. Many units replaced their entire complement more than once. I couldn't think of anything else to say. He looked miserable, holding the book in his lap like an IRS summons.

Later, when my associate and I were leaving the terminal, I saw this man turn away from the bulk of the travellers to walk down a long airport corridor by himself. He was lugging a decent collection of bags. I thought about it for a second - he couldn't be younger than 67, more like 70. Not a big man, but not all folded and fat with age. He was moving right along. I had a lump in my throat for a man who had humped his way across that volcanic pile 50 years ago, and

was still upset about it. Who knows how many friends' deaths were directly mentioned in the book?

Still not sure I wasn't intruding, I dropped my bags, signalled to my associate that I'd be right back, and trotted up to the retreating Marine.

I stepped up next to him with a weak smile, clapped him gently on the shoulder and said "Take care of yourself, okay?" I felt stupid, but he gave me a tolerant nod and continued on his way.

End of the Rout

I had always wondered when I would be writing about this topic. Here I am. Consider this news final, for the time has come: the Rout ends publication with this record-setting issue. That's the bad news, at least for fans. The good news is that we intend to go out with a clean and honourable slate. That is, all commitments will be honoured.

In practical issue terms, this means that this issue is the last to see print. I say issue with my tongue firmly in cheek, since we've all seen the vicious sort of "issue inflation" the Rout has been suffering from. But to look anything like the other ASL pubs out there, we've had to add to size.

Naw, that's not really it. It's just that bigger issues are more fun. We can put more stuff in 'em and they take more trips to the bathroom to read. And doing good scenario development takes time and that pushes issues back. No excuses.

We've been talking about the content for the last issues for a while now, and I can only say that some good stuff didn't make it in here. Oh well. Maybe you'll see it in BackBlast.

Of course, we have a good bit of article material and scenarios stacked up here, and these have been offered to other ASL publications. This is good, as we have some outstanding scenarios that simply haven't made it into an issue yet. Some may be put out on the Internet for kicks. Our staff will also turn its attention to writing for CH, BB, ASLN, the General and L. Ron Hubbard.

You'll see we turned our attention to some of those "other" ASL publications in this issue.

Post-Oktoberfest

This is a funny thing - a re-write of a Rout issue in mid-stream. This issue appeared almost as you see it at ASLOK 95 - the tenth ASLOK and the fifth ASLOK Rout. The version you're reading was changed a bit for those receiving it by mail, and benefits from some scenario fixes, article additions, etc.

For competition, let me just say that I believe Louie Tokarz beat Guy Chaney at The T-Patchers to win the top slot at ASLOK, thus thrusting himself into the top rung after several years of steady improvement.

Special attendees: Several Aussies, Shaun Carter of the UK and some interesting porn cards being used for OBA draws. Drawback with the cards: there's a woman getting the full thrust on the cover of each of them, plus some other action on the back. Distracting.

Items for Sale: the big items at this year's cash corner were ASLOK t-shirts from various years and two publications - this Rout and Critical Hit #3. In all honesty, the Critical Hit was the more significant. Lots of great scenarios, articles, art - the works.

Scenarios? Well, those CH scenarios saw a lot of play, and deservedly so. I played a couple and liked doing it. I'm glad to say that the scenarios in this issue were seen all over, too. I saw several games of Setting the Woods on Fire, several of The Cemetery, lots of Men of Stone, lots of The Corridor and a couple of Soldiers of Construction. I like to see that, since I worked hard to get these done for the occasion.

Baseball great Curt Shilling is trying to buy AH/ASL as of mid-November. Looks like the ASL sale is unlikely, but we'll see about the AH part. He was on hand at ASLOK, checking on support from the player/writer community, which he found plenty of. Everyone wants something better than the non-committment AH is doling out to our game.

ASLOK was more emotional this year. Bill Conner and Action Burk are calling it quits as event directors, so the event will undoubtedly change for 96. So there was thoughtful recognition of all they've done, organized by Mark Nixon. There was a nice moment or two of thanks for Bill and also for Bob MacNamara, who showed up after giving AH notice that he was out of there, on his way to join Charlie Kibler, also ex-AH, at TalonSoft, a computer wargame company.

My time with Fish was spent reminising on Belgium and our glorious video of La Gleize, Cheneux and Stoumont. And of my courageous crossing of the Ambleve, of course.

See you next time.

God Help the King

Rout Interview

Roger Best and Kurt Martin

Roger Best has been with the Rout almost since the beginning, making his presence felt most keenly in some of the most annoying areas: stamping, envelope stuffing, playtesting and mailing. His contributions to scenarios were especially welcome, in particular his North Afrika efforts of last year. Kurt Martin is Rout Boy. They met recently for some Hi-C.

RB: I feel compelled to ask some of the obvious, although it may pain you.

KM: Do your worst.

RB: Can I assume a no-bullshit interview?

KM: Let the questions set the tone.

RB: What moved you to print the Rout?

KM: I had always been interested in specialty publications, and I was trying to get the local ASL guys fired up about more formal gatherings. Essentially, I had the feeling that there were lots of people playing ASL in the Detroit area, and not much information about what they were doing or even who they were. So the very first Rout was simply named on the fly to get a little newsletter to the local slaves.

RB: But it wasn't long before word escaped.

KM: That's quite true. Within a few months I was sending copies overseas and to Avalon Hill guys. Of course, it was still free at that point, too.

RB: So has that local emphasis changed as the Rout has grown up?

KM: Actually, one of the reasons I'm going to get the hell out is to spend my time on more local and personal stuff. I rarely play the game right now because I'm so caught up in ASL as a national or international hobby, or even as a business. Since Eric Baker, Bruce Bakken, Cliff Gleason and Mitch Balicki have all left the Detroit ASL scene, I've been left as Joe Coordinator for local tournaments. Since the Rout and other projects like the Third Bridge have picked up, I've been a really bad coordinator. Only the Olympics have done well, and that's because I've been careful with that and had lots of help. So I want to go from being so scattered and inefficient back to a level where I can kick ass.

RB: What has you so wrapped up?

KM: My career has been doing cool things in the past couple of years. Since slightly before World Cup came to the US last year, though, it's been consuming lots of time. At several points, I've been travelling too much to have much of a life, although I did finish lots of Rout work in the Knight's Inn North in Indianapolis... I have a very fun little girl, (who, by the way, likes to carry around a purse full of six-sided dice). I have a wife (who is descended from Pocahontas, by the way) who likes her home clean and well-renovated. I teach in-line skating and train skating instructors. Sometimes I drink beer that you and I make... And somewhere in there I try to put together some cool writings and scenarios into some kind of a my-penis-is-bigger-than-yours ASL newsletter. I've spent many hours working on The Third Bridge and other development stuff for AH and the Annual. After all that is done, I play ASL. Usually late at night. In the basement. Alone. With the lights off. With your mom, Roger.

RB: But you said you were alone.

KM: Well, she's there in spirit.

RB: And video, no doubt.

KM: And leather.

RB: Perhaps we should tell people what happened to Msrs. Bakken, Balicki, Barker and Greason.

KM: Bruce Bakken has opened a salon in Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan. It's called Chez You or something. Mitch Balicki has gone back to his family business, training hunting dogs for northern Michigan Elk hunting. I think the place is called Kanine Killers. Derek Barker took a job in Australia, training local dealers on a combined Microsoft Bob and laptop platform. He's also doing a lot of bird-watching. And Cliff Gleason works in reproduction at an office of the National Rifle Association in Scottsdale, Arizona. His wife was also working there but she took a job as an injection mold specialist for a local toy company and now she's also free-lancing cavalry and AFV for Grenadier Miniatures.

RB: How do you think ASL is doing these days?

KM: There's a bit of a schism in the hobby in that the game system is a product of a for-profit company, yet it's something compelling enough that other, non-Avalon Hill people are putting enormous energy into it. Sometimes, and more often recently, the outside efforts are much more significant to the game than what the Hill is doing. The problem with that is the carving out of millions of tiny Grand Duchies that don't have the reach of a real game company. That and the often mentioned legal challenges of working with a supposedly copyrighted game system.

And some of the stuff out there sucks, although the quality really is indicative of the kind of people who get sucked in by ASL - most third party ASL products are very good. Some would argue that AH isn't doing ASL justice, and that their reach isn't really that great as a result. It will be interesting to see if AH gets in the face of people like Critical Hit about their attempts to actually sell ASL wares. Until recently, it's been geeks like me supplying stuff mostly at cost. There's certainly been no profit in the Rout for AH to get nervous about.

RB: So what's the future hold?

KM: It's hard to be too positive about the game system as it relates to AH. They are making a serious move to computer games, and they may have done well with their first titles. The way they're going, they will make a lot of money at the computer end, and it will continue to eat at their enthusiasm for board games. Add to that the fact that the ASL system is essentially complete, and that the development team for ASL has left AH or been re-assigned, and it's not hard to see that the game's AH days are numbered, at least from a development standpoint. It will still be on the shelves and it will still dominate Avaloncon, but I'm not sure it will drive people into a tizzy of molten desire without new products. And, of course, there's

been talk of AH itself going on the block, and it's easy to imagine a new owner chopping off dusty old board game crap.

RB: What about the stuff that's already underway?

KM: Well, you see in the latest Annual a picture of where things stand. For instance, the scenarios were a mixture; a bunch were from the Rout, several from the French magazine *Tactiques*, a few SL retreads and finally some new ones. There was also mention of the release of the rest of Dorkgroup Peiper, which is back in playtest to better balance the big campaign game. There isn't anything big holding that up, apparently. There's talk about Third Bridge and Mud & Blood, but AH doesn't own the rights to either of those products, so I don't know what they're actually going to do. There's perenial mention of the Axis Minor stuff, but I'm not holding my breath that Bob MacNamara will get near ASL soon. Gary Fortenberry is not an AH employee, but is expected to churn out some difficult projects in short order. Each of these playtests and production sequences is an effort.

RB: How is Third Bridge? Will we like it?

KM: It really is kick-ass. The units are cool, the board is the best-looking so far in ASL. The rules only run a few pages, but encompass a novel CG approach. And it has the heavy-replay scenarios like those in RB. It's much smaller than RB in some ways, such as the map, but it's a big game. It's a big step past GSTK [God Save The King, a free-lance effort of 1994] as it should be, but it ain't printed yet, either.

RB: So how do you picture an ASL world without the Rout?

KM: I think we're leaving at exactly the right time. I would be bummed if I felt I needed to stop producing the Rout without anything to take its place, but the fact is, the Rout is almost superfluous at this point. For a long time, we were a great source for scenarios, and one of the few. We didn't release shit scenarios, and we knew how to do tournament-sized ones. And we had a sense of humour, and we kept in touch with the hobby at the tournament level. If you read the Rout you knew what was up.

But Clerical Shit, ButtBlast and ASL Nouvelles cover all of that terrain and much more. I'll be very happy to help them any way I can, since they have taken the lead in a big way. The bulk of our scenario pool has gone to them, and that won't hurt. To tell you the truth, they're doing one thing that I think is more important than any other, and that is making themselves available through traditional hobby outlets. Board gaming and ASL won't go away soon, and ASL products that have a presence in hobby shops around the planet will help keep the hobby alive despite AH antics.

RB: Is it true that you're a major flamer?

KM: I am an enormous homosexual. I keep butt lubricants in my ASL boxes. Most ASLers are queer, don't you know?

RB: I don't know that.

KM: Me either. I couldn't be straighter. Straight as an arrow. Pin head, too.

RB: Thanks for the Rout. It's been a good haul.

KM: Thank you, Rog. It's been a pleasure. And thanks for your mom. She's been good, too.

A New SMC: The Traitor

Richard Rodgers w/ Kurt Martin

Corporal Alexi Smirnov was well sited near the top of a ridge. From his position, he could not only overlook the immediate battle but also the surrounding countryside. His battalion was attacking the German positions in the small village with their usual headlong gusto. The Germans were hard pressed to keep up with the sheer number of enemy troops rushing them, but thus far their fire discipline and terrain had enabled the Landsers to hold the village. They could not hold indefinitely, however, as their own casualties were mounting and their lines thinning.

Smirnoff spotted a line of lend-lease American trucks with red stars painted on them pull up behind a treeline not far away. They contained most of a rifle company - reinforcements that would tip the balance in favor of the brave Communists. Alexi gathered up the squad that was guarding him and his precious field phone. "I think I see some movement near the bottom of this ridge. Go down and make sure it isn't an enemy patrol," he barked abruptly.

The squad moved down the hill, slightly puzzled at the order to leave him behind, alone, but they had never disobeyed an order yet, and Alexi had never given them reason to. As they moved off, he picked up the handset, twisted the crank and called the commander of the 81mm mortar section.

"I need a spotting round," he said, giving coordinates. He eyed the trucks, which were still disgorging men and equipment. The spotting round came down a 150 yards north of the treeline shielding the trucks from the rest of the battle. "Shift targeting two increments south, and fire for effect," he said calmly but with an edge of urgency so that the mortar commander wouldn't dally.

The mortar attack was unforeseen and its effects were pronounced. The ground around the trucks and men erupted as the mortar bombs began to rain down. The soft-skinned trucks were shot through with shrapnel, some of them exploding as gas tanks brewed up or ammunition took hits. The troops already out of the trucks dove for what little cover there was. They hadn't thought to dig in, and the light woods were no cover as the mortars burst in the trees above, showering them in hot metal.

His squad headed up the hill quickly, having spotted the havoc in the line of trucks and realizing their artillery had gone badly astray. Anticipating this, Alexi moved quickly to the front of his shallow trench and took the handles of the squad's medium machinegun. The gun was too heavy to haul up and down hills on quick recon patrols, and so had been left behind for Alexi to guard.

He pulled back the charging handle to chamber the first round of a belt and waited. The squad came into view, moving quickly but not cautiously. The big, wheeled machinegun roared as Alexi cut down half of the men coming up the hill. The survivors dove for cover and fired a few unaimed shots up the hill, still wondering if there was some sort of horrible mistake.

Few of the reinforcements in that convoy would find their way to this battle, Alexi thought. He cut the phoneline and stuffed the field phone in a bag which he'd dispose of as soon as he could. He picked up his submachine gun and his rucksack and, careful to avoid detection by what was left of his squad, headed toward the German lines.

It had been quite a day. Alexi was tired, and struggled to remember the password that would allow him to pass through the German lines, get a decent meal and a shower, and finally put on the blue-grey uniform of a German infantryman he'd dreamed of for many years.

TRAITOR SMC

A traitor SMC is designated by SSR or allowed by mutual agreement in DYO. If allowed by DYO, consult the Traitor Recruiting Chart

TRAITOR RECRUITING CHART

DR Result

<=4 Traitor Available

>=5 No Traitor

DRM

-1 German vs. French in Alsace

-3 German vs. US in 12/44-1/45

-3 French vs. French

+2 Japanese

+3 Finn vs. Russians

SELECTION: If the Traitor Recruiting Chart indicates that a Traitor is available, the owning player may secretly select and record a Traitor from among the leader SMCs in his opponent's OB before any setup begins.

RESTRICTIONS: A Traitor SMC is always selected from the opponent's OB. The traitor SMC may never be the highest level leader, unless there are => 2 of that type or the OB only has one SMC. A Commissar may never be selected as a Traitor, even if no other leader is available. Heroes may not be Traitors (EX: A Traitor SMC may become a Heroic Leader through Heat of Battle DR). Armor leaders are eligible for selection as Traitors.

ACTIVATION: To activate a Traitor during the course of a scenario, a player may at any time, but only once per Game Turn, try to activate his designated Traitor. A Traitor is activated on a DR <= 8, modified by applicable DRM from the listing below:

TRAITOR ACTIVATION TABLE

DR Result

<=8 Traitor Activated

9-11 No Effect

DRM

- leaders drm

+Traitor SMC's Morale greater than 7

-1 DRM for morale of 6

This DR must be revealed if it is successful, but otherwise the identity of the Traitor and the DR may be kept secret. Once activated, the activating player becomes the Controlling player.

(Ex: a 10-3 Traitor (which could only be selected if the scenario had two 10-3 leaders) would be activated on a DR of 2 since it would receive a +3 for his leadership modifier and +3 for his morale being 3 over 7. In contrast, an 8-0 would require a 7 (+1 for morale over 7) while a 6+1 would be activated on a 10 (-1 modifier and -1 morale of 6).

COUNTER FORM

Once activated, replace the Traitor's original counter with an equivalent leader counter from an OB not in play, if possible. Some leader SMCs, (such as with a Japanese 8+1 SMC) have no equivalent in other OBs and when activated may be marked with a Berserk counter, which has no effect other than to indicate the Traitor counter. Until activated, a traitor acts as a normal leader in all respects. There is no other effect to activating the Traitor.

HIP leaders must be immediately revealed once activated, including armor leaders.

Once activated, a traitor remains activated until one of three conditions is met:

1) The Traitor is Detected and Eliminated by the player/side of his initial OB. No LLMC is required;

2) The Traitor's Controlling player rolls an original DR of 12 for any activity which involves the Traitor, at which point he is Eliminated, in addition to any other effects of that DR. If the Traitor is not yet Detected at this point, a LLTC is required if the MMCs stacked with the leader are of a lower morale level than the Traitor SMC.

TRAITOR ABILITIES

Once Activated, the Traitor SMC is controlled by the activating player. The Traitor SMC may perform virtually any action allowed to a normal leader. The Traitor SMC may still only perform actions in the non-controlling player's Player phases.

(Note that a Traitor can never perform more actions/combinations of actions in a phase than a normal leader.)

The controlling player immediately takes control of the Traitor SMC and of any other units in his location (EX: If a Traitor is in the same location as a higher ranking Leader at any time, control of any MMC in that location and equipment they possess remains with the player with the higher leader. The betrayed player may then attempt have his leader pass a TC, with his own modifier as a DRM, and with the inverse of the Traitor's modifier as a DRM.

If successful, the Traitor SMC is eliminated and removed from play.) These other units are controlled by the Traitor until he is eliminated/ detected/ leaves their location. Units in the location must take a TC to avoid taking part in traitorous actions. If they pass the TC they are under the Traitor's control for purposes of that action.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

In addition to normal leader actions, the Traitor SMC may perform the following special actions, arranged by game phase:

RALLY PHASE (RPh)

Apply his modifier inversely to rally attempts.

Disable weapons he solely possesses, whether they are malfunctioned or not.

PREP FIRE PHASE (PFPh)

Fire at or direct units to fire at or direct any form of OBA onto/at any player's units.

Place a low ammo counter on any support weapon stacked with him.

Malfunction any weapon he possesses (Disable/remove if already malfunctioned)

MOVEMENT PHASE

Any units under the Traitor's control which have not moved and are not marked with a Prep Fire counter may use Defensive First/Final Fire versus units moving in their own Movement Phase. This fire is resolved as Advancing Fire. Mark such units with a Prep Fire counter.

DEFENSIVE FIRE PHASE

Any units under the Traitor's control may fire at any units/hexes.

ROUT PHASE

Force controlled units to break

May rout/force units to Rout without regard to direction of woods, buildings.

The History of ASL Publications

Kurt Martin

There have been a number of publications dedicated, more or less, to the Advanced Squad Leader game system. I thought I'd take a few minutes to review with you the history of these publications.

Note that the only thing that's piled up faster than the boxes and bins required to hold the game is the amount of dead tree flesh that's accumulated from the various publications.

Sometimes the trees died for a good cause and sometimes they should have been left in Oregon with Packwood. At any rate, here's a chronological survey of those ASL mags. I refer to most of them as zines, as in fanzines, but some qualify as real magazines.

Keep in mind that the editorializing is mine, but that the facts are usually on my side. The tally under each title gives an idea of when the pub started printing ASL stuff, about how many issues it's done and when it died in some cases.

The General
ASL News (ASLN)
On All Fronts (OAF)
In Contact (IC)
ASL Annual
The Rout Report (RR)
At The Point (ATP)
Tactiques (TAC)
Fire For Effect (FFE)
ASL Union of Gamers (ASLUG)
Trail Break (TB)
Critical Hit (CH)
BackBlast (BB)
Time on Target (TOT)

The General

1985, many issues

Due to its status as the official mouthpiece of Avalon Hill, The General was first on the ASL publication scene. Over the years it has given good coverage to ASL, making new modules an important feature and producing a series of well-known and occasionally excellent scenarios.

Of course, it's hard to get excited about the General's coverage of ASL, as it has been nothing if not episodic. Long periods have gone by without any ASL contents (and sometimes without any Generals!), and even these spells have been punctuated with mediocre fare.

Lately the printing of scenarios has been more consistent, as has the publication of the General, but there has been a dearth of quality writing on the game.

But as long as the company has some stake in the game, this is at least a place where there will probably be a regular ASL page or two, as well as Opponents Wanted listings.

ASL News (ASLN)

1988, 29 issues

First let me break the news to you: English is not the first language for these guys. With that said, let me introduce to you ASL News, the oldest ASL publication of any significance (we'll get to OAF later).

Published by one Philippe Leonard of Belgium, ASL News has gone from a flopsy newsletter to a nicely bound magazine, complete with nice graphics and a fancy cover.

Indeed, this magazine has undergone a startling transformation in the last couple of years, and it's been quite exciting to see it change into something with physical beauty as well as brains.

Like many of the ASL 'zines, ASLN is fronted by Philippe, who is the main brain, but it benefits from great research and a talented staff, including Pedro Ramis, ace sidekick and do-all, as well as an artist (cartoons!) and lots of those Euro types doing playtest, etc.

Yes, they make their share of errors in English, but they have a strong bent for research and understanding the war, have no fears about scenarios (they average at least a few new ones per issue), work hard and have clear eyes for the hobby.

In a way, this is the most pure ASL zine. They've been sleeping with it the longest.

On All Fronts (OAF)

1985, 119 issues

No use pulling punches. Publisher Terry Treadaway has isolated himself from most of the public ASL world. Having alienated plenty of folks, Terry keeps churning out material to some unknown number. Other than unpopularity, OAF's longevity is its main claim to fame.

While OAF has published well over a hundred scenarios and a bazillion issues, the quality has wandered around from inspired to insipid, with a large quantity of forgettable photo-copied messes making up the bulk.

One finds a few OAF scenarios making the rounds at tournaments, but the zine and its children are generally orphans from Arkansas.

In Contact (IC)

1989-90, 2 issues (sort of), RIP

1989 saw Northern Ohio flirt with ASL publishing for a short period. In Contact benefited from the efforts of Wild Bill Call Me Grofaz Fish Conner, who could be seen at almost all of the few ASL events of those days.

A simple newsletter tied to eight greatly-appreciated scenarios (in those days of scenario deprivation), IC was the first Let's Chat About ASL publication, and in that way the father of all those that have come.

Sure the scenarios were mixed fare, and sure, we never saw that much-awaited second issue (although a second, and much lamer pack of scenarios did eventually appear), but IC was a hint that you could just churn out a newsletter and people would eat it up.

ASL Annual

1989-93, 1995, 7 issues

Of course, 1989 saw the real ASL publication come from the Hill. Once the 1989 Annual hit the racks, there was no going back to a world where the only scenarios and articles would come at the whim of boxed sets and General editors.

Here was a magazine, of magazine quality, dedicated to The Game. And scenarios! Enough to float a couple of corpulent competitors!

Okay, so most of the scenarios won't be seen on the most-played list, but we all know how valuable that dedicated-to-ASL magazine has been for keeping momentum in the hobby. 1993 was great because there were two Annuals and 1994 was slack without one.

If AH dies on ASL, this will be harder to replace than modules or campaign games, if only because it was printed as a professional magazine. Yes, there was talk of eight million bayonets, but the Annual represents a high point for a magazine dedicated to a single game.

The Rout Report (RR)

December 1990-November 1995, 29 issues (sort of), RIP

Also brewing in that strange year at the end of the 80's was this scary rag. Not even a twinkle until late in the year, The Rout Report started in way-quiet mode, with a few dozen photo copies. It was never meant to attain any altitude in particular.

And it didn't. At least not for a while.

But it did show that there was a fun end to the hobby; an area where entertainment value was found beyond the margins of rules-speak, where the player and the event meet and there's more to do than win and lose. Fun.

And the Rout, while starting with a bi-monthly release schedule, finally settled in on Oktoberfest as its publication focus, if any, publishing a special issue for each of its five Oktobers, including this one.

And the Rout makes a unique exit with this fifth Oktoberfest issue by 1) having a final issue and 2) refunding subscription money to those signed up for a longer tour than issue 29. And gosh, by going Internet.

At The Point (ATP)

January 1991-March 1992, 11 issues, KIA

Popping up just behind the Rout but with much more noise was Marc Hanna's At The Point. ATP was meant from the start to be taken seriously, and was to provide everything that a flaming hobby needed: a forum for rules discussions, examples of good play, inspirational articles.

Scenarios were too scary to tackle at first, but later became a big effort. Writers were recruited from among the players of ASL for the first time, since AH held the Annual and General content close to home.

It was an exciting development, because here was the In Contact theory proven. Of course, it didn't last long.

Mr. Hanna proved unsteady, and trembles set off by a household move had hardly settled when his ATP ardor started to fade, challenged by work and woman and all.

ATP died in less than two years, disappearing at the end without a promised final big bang issue, but with plenty of subscription money. It was a nasty hint of ugly possible futures, like IC but without the positive aspects.

As a side note, ATP was the birthplace of the Nixon/Banozic Crossfire series.

Tactiques (TAC)

December 1991, 8 issues

Over on the other side of the ocean, the Euros had been dealing with ASL's intricacies themselves for quite a while. Those French types, always given to fits of inspiration, filled themselves up with nerve and began to publish a French language zine.

One would think this particularly nervy, given the high level of English comprehension absolutely required by the game. But no,

they were serious and have carved out a unique piece of terrain for themselves with the zine Tactiques.

While translations to English are available (and in the case of some of their CG and scenario productions, recommended), here is a case of a publication which neatly serves a specific audience.

Yes, they act as though they are the true disciples of the holy word from Baltimore (something we'll soon discuss in more detail), but they do know the game. Unfortunately, they won't network enough to avoid confusion and duplication across other zine lines (such as with SSR and CG's, respectively) but that's their French duty, no?

Fire For Effect (FFE)

1992-1994, 12 issues, DOA

Coming close on the heels of ATP was a hopeful competitor, then a replacement. Sponsored by money-man Curt Shilling and produced by fresh-faced Robert Wolkey, FFE would be less elitist, more helpful and wouldn't bother with scenarios, which at that point were beginning to appear in earnest in both ATP and RR.

Quickly making an impact with more graphics and more help for newer players, FFE gathered steam with a solid stream of quality input from a variety of writers and an added focus on ASL events, including the ASL Open, the "Be-all" competitive ASL event offering lots of cash for winning.

But FFE died out in 1994, with Mr. Wolkey moving on to other fare.

ASL Union of Gamers (ASLUG)

March 1993-Dec 1993, 8 issues, KIA

One cry about ASL zines was their irregularity. Certainly the Annual and The Rout did nothing to make people feel that stability was everywhere, and the rapid disappearance of ATP prepared the stage for another one-man show in the guise of Gary Fortenberry.

Intense about ASL publishing as he is about playing the game, Gary proposed to create a Union of players, a tighter national/international group of ASLers.

But the scope of his zine was to be "to report on and improve tournament play." To that end, the magazine would print and study its own scenarios. And he would print on a regular schedule. He bought out the ATP action entirely, the first known exchange of cash for ASL publication material outside of the AH umbrella.

Things started out right, with content growing and a fine series of scenarios soon flowing from Texas. That was spring of 1993. Within a year things had gone to hell. ASLUG had wandered all over the calendar, a special final issue was promised but didn't appear and large subscription checks went on a permanent trip, leaving legions of pissed-off ASL dudes. (Special note: thus did AH earn no points for later hiring Gary to "take care of" things ASL on their end. Didn't they know about this chapter of ASL lore?)

Such was the end of yet another one-man zine in the glamorous world of ASL.

Trail Break (TB)

1993, 1 issue, RIP

There's a special breed of ASL. It hails from New York, where there's a special breed of lots of stuff.

In this case, it's a fast-talking, fast-playing kind of breed, and it doesn't take to bullshit. Or at least, bullshit that doesn't come from its part of the country.

Serious ASL guy Steve Pleva, no stranger to the convention circuit, has combined forces with a certain Ray Tapio, and they have created a number of ASL creatures of late.

Earlier in their wanderings a child was born. A quiet child in the tradition of In Contact. It was Trail Break, and it was simple ASL information without a lot of hype.

Started and ended in 1993, it went away quietly, after but a single nice little issue, but left a certain legacy which we will explore in the next entry.

Critical Hit(CH)

1994, 3 issues

Like some incredible Gamera-like monster-spawn, from the embryonic beginning that was Trail Break came the leviathan, Critical Hit. CH has articles, it has editorials, it has scenarios and it's constantly spawning new offspring in the form of mini-CG, CG, new vehicle counters and other slimy ASL ilk.

Although a stickler like me might say that some of the scenarios could have been held back as too thin, or that there was a certain OAFishness to the early advertising, (but then I'm a nervy guy to critique anything on the quality front) there's no mistaking this as the real item - a regular periodical focused on ASL. A real magazine, a professional publication, with great potential and a bright future.

Ray Tapio is the New Yorker with the attitude behind the iron mask, and he's driving CH to be a world publication. He has the artists, the writers, the printers, etc. We, the ASL few, have to just be glad that this zine is poised for greatness - and that it's going to bring lots of new guys into the fold, because this will be the first zine to break into serious publication numbers - thousands, not hundreds of copies.

Backblast(BB)

1994, 2 issues, RIP

Like magic, the Rout era was swept away by the damn near simultaneous appearance in 1994 of CH and Backblast.

Backblast is a departure from the one-man publishing norm in ASL, with an organization calling itself Multi-Man Publishing forming to produce it. The group includes long-time playtesters for AH - Steve Petersen, Brian Youse, Perry Cocke. These stalwarts decided to intentionally base their new pub on multiple shoulders/backs/brains. A worthy idea made more attractive by some of the shenanigans listed above. (See ATP, ASLUG. Of course, that was WHY they chose this method.)

The first BackBlast was the ugly sister to the first CH, but it was the smart ugly sister. With some emphasis on Night, there was included the single best de-bullshitting article yet printed about ASL called Bring On The Night.

This combined with a decent batch of scenarios and some other worthy articles said that BB was ready to join CH as proof that ASL could be some weird sort of international publishing phenom; a game abandoned by its creators (and pseudo-owners) but nurtured by fanatics like a strange breed of magic.

BackBlast #2 was so nervy as to include ASL humour! And lost much of the ugly problem to boot. The included scenarios were more solid than the previous bunch, the 40 page format was continued and it was clear that victory was in the air.

Then an interesting thing happened: BB and MMP paused, didn't publish a third issue, then announced that there would be no third issue, for MMP would now turn its attention to acting as Avalon Hill's official production group for ASL. Hmmm.

We'll see how that one turns out, but it marks an effort by AH to buy the best guys still available for ASL (without actually **HIRING** anyone, you'll note.) And we'll keep in mind that AH has already squandered all of the ASL talent it had built up over a long period, thus leaving it with **NO ONE** in-house working on ASL.

Lost in the furor over this development was the departure of yet another ASL zine, in this case a memorable one. Adieu, buttblast. That leaves CH to hold down the mainstream zine scene.

Time on Target (TOT)

1994, 2 issues

Like France, the West Coast (Ok, California) has its own gig. In addition to spewing God Save the King, the I-didn't-know-about-Third-Bridge Arnhem CG, CA used 1994 to spawn a magazine more or less devoted to the Battle of the Bulge's 50th anniversary.

Conspicuous by its attractive everything and actual availability for the anniversary, Time On Target is the spurting of young Mr. Mark Neukom. It seems that Mr. Neukom just couldn't get off his bulge-kick. So he built a zine around 12 scenarios. All Bulge scenarios.

The scenarios include what are now some tournament favorites. The magazine, despite some intense research, is somewhat less memorable, since it is focused on three things: the scenarios, supplemental armour, and bayonet charges. The last two are what I was suggesting about the confusion effect of high quality zines, but hey! It's a game.

And now TOT is paying us a second visit, with an as-yet-unseen piece focusing on the drive by German Marine units to restore the situation in the West very late in the war - spring 1945. It includes a whopping 20 scenarios! Time will tell how this product stands up to scrutiny, but it's certainly another interesting entry.

As a footnote, I just received a little four-page newsletter from England called View From The Trenches, issue 4. It looks a lot like the first issues of the Rout, with the same focus - getting guys talking and playing. Seems the lads are having the first UK ASL convention ever this month. I wish them well. Contact Peter Phillips, 49 Lombardy Rise, Leicester LE5 0FQ.

And that's the conclusion of our tour. From nasty photo-copies of inspired but scribbled this and that to magazines all our own. So many that even Mark Nikon didn't write for all of them.

Book and Movie Review

Roger Best

The Book: Tennozan

"There was a fury, a storm of devastation, to the campaign on Okinawa that surpassed the ground fighting seen anywhere else in the war."

Geoffrey Perret, US Army historian

There are many books about war and many of them concern the second World War. Like many of you, I've read a good number of those books. This is the best one I've ever read. It's so good, it easily transcends its subject to cover war in general.

This is true, in large part, because the book covers in detail subjects that have always been taboo in war reporting, and this new terrain represents some of the best parts of the book. There are complete chapters devoted to Civilian Suffering, American Atrocities and Close Combat. These are not historical revisionism at work, but rather a more complete picture of war as it thrived on a single island. And they are sobering.

In the introduction, author George Feifer points out that war's horrors can only exist because outsiders can't know it. Of the eleven million uniformed men in 1945, some 7 percent of the American population, about 5 percent served in infantry combat divisions, of which only about 60 percent were in the lines. (That makes .21 percent, a speck). A good part of the book delves into the horrors of those few.

The Close Combat chapter is especially chilling. Since one well-known fact of WWII (and Vietnam, etc.) is that America's huge firepower doesn't necessarily translate into huge enemy losses, Okinawa would once again see the individual infantryman as the key to actually taking and holding ground, and once the powers that be decided that all of Okinawa would have to be "secure", the infantrymen were doomed.

The year's rainy season was wilder than usual. Most Americans could not imagine rain so heavy or constant. "The men shivered in their puckered skin. The outbreak of typhoid occurred during those downpours. Jungle rot spread from feet to the crotch. Ringworm in the belt area was sometimes so painful that combat troops could not wear their packs or cartridge belts."

Hauling heavy ammunition, combat loads and water during downpours, through seas of mud, was more than enough to drive the men of both sides even further into malnutrition and exhaustion. Carrying the wounded was even worse. Most American troops lost 15 to 25 pounds at the terrific rate of up to a pound a day. Starvation, dehydration and exhaustion were even worse for the Japanese, bordering on the impossible.

But this is known and is almost imaginable. The book goes farther down a grim road less traveled, and somehow the knowledge is liberating: this is more like the real face of war.

The flies were brightly colored and enormous. They covered any exposed food in an instant, would fly into an open mouth, and clung to the mounds of dead and excrement scattered everywhere.

Excrement? Oh yes, "the pus and puke and slime and shit of a quarter million harrowed men mixed into the battlefields seas of mud."

"When a man was sent on a mission alone, his buddies often sent him off with a reminder to "keep a tight ass." Unconsciously or otherwise, that good luck wish and admonition to come back alive derived from the prevalence of messing one's pants in such situation when bullets and shell fragments hit."

A campaign game at the squad or company level becomes silly when you look at real life casualty rates. Yes, we'd like to believe that Smitty has a chance to go all the way, and take his buddies with him, too. But the meatgrinder of Okinawa guaranteed that most of the men sent to the front would be killed or wounded. Very few made it all the way. Second Lieutenants came and went so fast the troops considered them smart if they followed the lead of their men. One average battalion started the fighting with 1145 men. 3000 men were listed as serving with it just six weeks later, meaning each man had been replaced twice.

The book reveals other areas of war that we've seen little of. Non-battle casualties and friendly fire incidents are covered in detail. The Army shoots down Corsairs, the Corsairs strafe Marines, the artillery shells everyone. Men setting up guns blow their own heads off. Men who've fought their way across the entire Pacific suddenly become huddling incoherents. Commanders refuse to send their men forward to be slaughtered, men go berserk with terror and shoot their comrades.

Night fighting in the PTO is uncovered as a terror beyond all others. Men lay in muddy holes, too exhausted to stay awake, too tense to sleep, puking up C rations, sliming their pants with dysentery because it's too dangerous to leave the foxhole at night. Night after night the Japanese grab up their courage and slink forward, one finger extended to detect the deadly trip wire, bowels in a knot,

crawling across the maggot-infested corpses to reach the American lines and a sudden death.

And here, at last, is the courage and suffering of the Japanese soldier published. Stupid and brutal in so many ways, Tennozan brings the experiences of some of the few survivors to light, and at last they are humans, and the mysteries of their part of the war are unraveled.

But a review cannot convey the whole picture, part of which is intended to convince us that it was the very excesses of Okinawa that prompted the use of the atomic bombs. Be that as it may, Tennozan is an honest act in history, one that does much to bring to light the truth of modern war. Terrible as it is, it is better to know than to continue in ignorance.

The Movie *Mediterraneo*

(Winner, Best Foreign Film, 1991)

Our protagonists in this film are Italians. Specifically, they are Italian infantry and it's 1940. They are shuttling around the Mediterranean, scouting small islands. There aren't many of them and they aren't heavily armed. Early in the film they have an encounter with the British Navy.

This is a delightful film. I have to admit that I had no idea what it was about when I rented it, but I was comforted by the fact that it had one an Oscar. When I realized just who the featured guests were, I laughed.

But that was only the first of the surprises.

Rent it, and you, too, can discover why I love Vanna Barba and Diego Abantantuono, two of the stars. And you may find yourself humming the theme music and calling out "Sergeante. Lo Russo?"

Who says the Italians don't make great movies?

She Wore A Yellow Ribbon

Tim Hundsdoerfer

It seemed like a good idea at first. Teach my wife the basics of ASL and I wouldn't hear any more complaints about the time and money I spend. And I'd finally have that regular opponent. The one night the answering machine informed me that I had made a grave error.

"Hi, you've reached Tim and Molly's. Leave a message at the beep and we'll get back to you: ***beeeep***"

"Hi, Tim, your sister's bringing over your nieces tonight, so Idecceede to go to Tom's to btake him and Marty on in The Last Bid again. Tom says he and Marty have a sure defense. Right. Don't wait up for me. There's pizza in the freezer and I rented Happy Little Elves for the girls." Beeeep.

Oops.

The next night, I came home determined to retrieve the situation. She met me at the door.

"You should change. The Crandals are coming over."

Oh, no. Ted was a zealot. The IIFT was unthinkable, Vehicle Notes sublime, the Sequence of Play divider - memorized.

"Don't be mean to Ted tonight. If he wants to use the IFT, you let him. He IS a guest. It wouldn't kill you to keep track of Battlefield Integrity, either." She smiled way too sweetly. "Oh, and there are only three beers, so save them for the Crandals." Ouch.

Three hours later, we're all around the gaming table. I'm looking at Jill Crandal out of the corner of my eye. She's actually looking at the Concealment Gain Table! Setup has never taken so long.

"Just get out a 7-0," I say, taking control.

"No, I want Cpl. Engelke. He battle-hardened for me that time we played Strangers In A Strange Land, remember?" Yow.

As the game got underway, Ted's KV ventured into the line of sight of my 88LL.

"You're DOOMED!" I roared with delight.

"I TOLD you not to move there," Jill said to Ted. "Now you've completely exposed my flank. Next time, I'm taking the KV's. Why weren't you more conservative with your armour? You have scads of cheap Russian MMC to cover them. You didn't even bring your OBA down to help. You still had an FFE:1 out there..." Sheesh. As I move my Panthers onboard to engage some T-34/85's, I notice they are "D" models, rather than the better "G."

"Hey, the wife pulled out the wrong Panthers, these are D's. Wait a minute and I'll get the right ones."

"Uh, no," Ted began. "The 94 Annual has an errate page that states "Once play has begun, you have to use the counters on board, even if they're the wrong ones."

"That's stupid," I said. "Besides, the Annual can't be out yet - it's only 1997."

"I've got a friend who picked up a copy at last year's Avaloncon." Ted reaches down and pulls out a copy of something that looks like an Annual, in a zip-lock bag.

My face turns read. I turn to my wife: "How can you spend 45 minutes looking for a specific 7-0 and get the wrong Panther?"

"D, G, what's the difference? Stop picking on me and conduct your overrun. Besides, it could have worked out in your favor. I could have pulled out something better."

"What's better than a Panther G?" I muttered, turning back to the board.

"I think Char B's are cute," she said, brightly.

I started to mumble. "Yeah, the only thing ever built with a bigger butt than your mother."

"What was that?"

"One to start up" I continued. The dice roll. Sure, it's boxcars. A whine began to slip out from between my clenched teeth.

"Have some pate and shut up" she said.

All that was four months ago. Now, as she played for the trophy of Firefight 97, I sat and watched, Budweiser in hand. She was rolling over defending champion Tom Repetti, confusing him with commentary about the shades and hues of the counter mix as she crunched his Krauts with the Commies from Soldiers of Destruction.

Now I often re-think my brilliant idea of teaching my wife ASL. I now know, like a character in a Greek tragedy, women and ASL do not mix. So, gentlemen, as the old toast goes, "To our wives and sweethearts - may they never meet."

The World of ASL Campaign Games

A quick review for those who are new

To understand the metamorphosis that ASL has undergone since its inception in 1985, one only has to look at the list of available scenarios. When Beyond Valor was released, it contained a grand total of 10 scenarios, and this defined the limit of the new system. So here was a game with an incredible new rulebook whose very table of contents listed all the ways it would expand (PTO, Solitaire, etc.) but only ten situations to play for all of World War II. And all of those on the East Front.

Those days, of course, are long gone. Within a few years, a couple of DYO systems and a wealth of new scenarios were added, including entirely new theatres such as North Africa and the PTO. But one of the biggest developments, if not the biggest, was the release of Red Barricades (AKA Red's Barbeque). Here was a chance to string together a whole series of connected scenarios, featuring a historical battle on an accurate map, all for one overall victory. Short of a "Play the entire East Front" campaign game, this is probably the ultimate arrival for the game in terms of size.

Of course, as I write this, not only has Avalon Hill released another CG in the form of the Historical ASL (HASL) game Kampgruppe Peiper, but there are several others in the works. Here's a quickie Rout-style look at each that we know of as of this fall:

Red Barricades

Subject: Stalingrad, 1942

Status: Published by AH, 1988

Source: Many players, Charlie Kibler

Good: Concentration of forces, scenarios, CG replay value

Bad: None

This is still the king. And while ASL is a small game in terms of total players involved, this game is quite significant in that it brings a huge amount of replay value to a single map. Unlike so many other board games, you can never say how the big Campaign Games in RB will turn out. Year after year, games on the same map come out entirely unlike the classic sorts like Afrika Korps. Other than the main modules, you have to have RB.

KGP I (Stoumont)

Subject: KG Peiper, 1944, Bulge

Status: Published by AH, 1993

Source: Philippe Leonard, Belgium

Good: New kind of map, Bulge

Bad: Hard to read map, gnarly CG

Developed over many years of excellent research, KGP has been a frustrating and illustrative product. Avalon Hill was slow to get this one to market, and still has not produced the remaining two maps and CG's that are part of KGP as a whole. This may never happen.

Philippe's crew did a great job creating this set of rules and scenarios, but they can't change the hill or the map, which came out too dark to make reading the hill depictions easy enough. The CG in this box is clunky, and although fixed by a release in ASL News (Philippe's magazine) will still be the one most players play.

Operations of SS Panzer Abteilung 102 in the Normandy Campaign

Subject: Hill 112, Normandy, 1944

Status: Printed by Critical Hit, 1994

Source: Steve Pleva, Ray Tapio

Good: Good concept, nice scale, cheap!

Bad: Some rules problems, low replay value

Put out as a quickie by the guys who are now Critical Hit, this is a real gem in that it's small and can be played straight through in a few sittings. It has good scale and good feel, played on existing boards with one overlay to create the hill. There are some problems in the rules for the CG that will be cleared up in the next version, I'm sure.

God Save The King

Subject: Arnhem 1944
Source: Heat of Battle guys
Good: Cheap, fun, balanced
Bad: Ugly map, historical dreamland, low production values

Not a monster expensive game in a box, but rather good ASL in an inexpensive wrapper. A few California guys put their heads together in the early 90's and decided that an Arnhem CG would be cool. Since they hadn't heard of the Third Bridge debacle, they thought they'd hit upon a new action for CG coverage. If TB ever sees print, this will be forgotten, but until then, it's an Arnhem game.

Tarawa

Subject: Tarawa 1943
Status: In development
Source: Heat of Battle
Good and Bad: Unknown

Jumping off their success with GSTK, the Heat of Battle guys are currently hard at work on a Tarawa CG. Life is funny, for it's one of the other things that the Dagger guys thought about for a CG while they were doing TB. Now the idea will see the light of day, and soon, if the HOB delivery of GSTK is any indication.

Third Bridge

Subject: Arnhem 1944
Status: In limbo
Source: Eric Baker, Kurt Martin, Don Petros
Good: Best map ever, solid rules, CG and scenarios
Bad: Still not available

The saga continues. At present, AH isn't sure what to do about board games, ASL or TB, so while TB is still being discussed, its status as an actual game is still up in the air. Beautiful new map, great OB's, interesting CG twists. See the TB Story in this issue.

The Stonne Heights

Subject: Stonne, 1940
Status: In playtest
Source: Pedro Ramis
Good: Small, interesting historical map, new focus (France 1940)
Bad: ?

Once it's all together, this will be a good change of pace for ASL CG's. Yes, the Germans are in this one, too, but the time is 1940 and they're going to get beat up by the French this time. Coming as it does from the same guy who did much of the research for KGP, this will undoubtedly have excellent historical value (it already does), and the map is cool (big hexes, village on a hill crest, forest, water tower, no castle) so we just have to wait to see who prints it. Will be in good shape by early 96.

KGP II

(La Gleize & Cheneux)
Subject: KG Peiper, 1944
Status: In progress at AH
Source: Philippe Leonard, Pedro Ramis
Good: Cool maps, cool units, cool scenarios
Bad: STILL not out

This box may be stronger than KGPI, especially as it works out some of the kinks in the rules for all three CG's. I'm a big fan of these maps and the scenarios, and the long development time has only sweetened the package. Early 96 printing is planned.

Central Stalingrad

Subject: Stalingrad, 1942
Status: In progress at AH
Source: Tom Morrin
Good: Huge
Bad: ?

A different Stalingrad battle on a huge, detailed map from Don Petros, the Charlie Kibler heir apparent. Not owned by AH, we'll see where this one sees print. Not destined to be seen by the masses until 1997. Cause it's big. Cool new terrain types: fountains, squares, gutted buildings.

Tractor Factory

Subject: Stalingrad, 1942
Status: No action
Source: Don Petros

Just a map at present, but a neat one, depicting another factory area. Lots of railroads, complete with cars!
Pegasus Bridge
Subject: Coup de main, Normandy
Status: In progress at BB
Source: Multi-Man
Good: Airborne, gliders, etc.
Bad: Limited interest?

Since this ended up being more of a master stroke and less of a battle, I'm not sure what we'll see here. Time will tell, but the quality should be high :)

Mud & Blood

Subject: New Guinea
Status: In development
Source: Steve Swann, Critical Hit

I haven't seen this one yet, but by all accounts it should be a good one. For one thing, Steve Swann is to scenario development what Mark Nixon is to writing about ASL - the number one dude. He cranks it out, and this one was done with the help of an Australian, who was able to get the killer research required. This was to be Critical Hit's second big child, but now the political crap is keeping all ASL development down.

Construct a Story

Ever notice how those scenario action reports and aftermaths all sound kind of the same? Well, here's your chance to change the face of history. Try your hands at a little scenario writing, Route-story. (This is the template we use for all of our scenarios.)

THE BIG FIGHT

The fortunes of war were changing and _____ (Montgomery, Rommel, Zhukov, Patton, Madonna) felt that the time was right to begin a new offensive in the _____ (desert, northern wastes of Ukraine, Burma, the bedroom, the bathroom). Bringing forward his only _____ (reserve, armour, ski troops, homosexuals, beer), the General decided to risk all to secure a quick _____ (victory, score, buzz, meatloaf). Making _____ (expert, clumsy, feeble, dainty) use of the cover of night, his subordinates arranged for a _____ (massive, cheesy, slippery, flapping) feint to the north designed to _____ (mislead, educate, seduce, masticate) the enemy. Once this was achieved, there would be no _____ (vacation, condoms, last will or testament, disco) for any units caught within the confines of the _____ (Kiev, Assam, Peoria, waterbed) salient, for the 12th _____ (Mountain, Precinct, Juror) would certainly show no _____ (mercy, tan lines, nipple).

AFTERMATH: The fighting was exceptionally (bitter, tough, bad, bloody, boring, loud, unfortunate), with neither side asking for, or giving _____ (quarter, quarters, donuts, discounts, blowjobs). Blows were exchanged throughout the heat of the _____ (day, moment, womb), with neither side able to gain an advantage. Communications on both sides were disrupted due to the continuing _____ (solar flare, pajama party, orgasm). Growing desperate due to the lack of progress, _____'s (Montgomery, Rommel, Zhukov, Shula, Clinton) staff threw every available _____ (biscuit, shell casing, cook, cross-dresser) into the _____ (fight, toilet, sock). This _____ (pitiful, incredible, massive, real big) addition finally saved the day, and the _____ (Coast Guard, IRS, Tort Reform Attorney Association, American Association of Retired Persons) units poured forward to totally crush the losers in their stinking entrenchments. There was no longer any _____ (hope, pie, lubricant) for the defenders, or their huddled masses. Only a fight that broke out between attacking Army and _____ (Navy, Notre Dame, fish) troops saved the few who escaped to tell the terrible story of their _____ (anal penetration, checkbook balancing, aunt's hair color, toenails, lunch).

How To Play Outside

Karl Wallace

We first mentioned this concept in the Rout quite some time ago. I don't even want to look up exactly which issue it appeared in the "Coming Next Time" section. At any rate, spring is way past sprunging, and this topic we're flunging at ya.

Our experience with this topic is based on two basic outdoor systems, and I'll (mostly) limit my comments to these.

The first, and most obvious outdoor ASL system (OASL) is based on simply moving some chairs and a table or two out of doors. My first experience with this dates back to Taking The Left Tit (oooh!), that is, the scenario of that name, which I played on a back porch with my now-more-lost-than-Rex brother, Dale.

We set up four chairs and one table to accommodate the board, our butts and cloaking/HIP displays. It was a pleasant summer afternoon. We had to squint at the counters, and for once it wasn't due to eye fatigue.

We had a good time, his Americans blew by my Germans (as is usual in this one), and then the wind picked up, scattered his cloaking display and ended the game before the inevitable Complete Collapse of the Axis.

To state the obvious, wind, sun and flying debris should be on your list of considerations when playing outside using this method. Otherwise, it beats the crap out of playing inside if the weather is good, and not much trouble.

Actually, I once dropped a whole tray of Finn MMC in my driveway during the winter, and although they didn't scatter and all and were quickly gathered up, I got quite a kick out of finding a single, faded, weather-beaten Green squad of Karelian Killers the next spring. But that's another story.

OASL method B is more interesting and involved. Our example scenario was a custom job for the occasion of trying this method of play for the first time, over the summer, and involved Germans trying to pry some tenacious Free French defenders from some North African buildings around Bir Hakeim.

Since we were playing a desert situation, it was the perfect time for Sandbox ASL. As the previous owners had seen fit to install a fairly healthy sandbox in my backyard, it was not hard to come up with a big area to serve as the mapboard.

Our scenario day was a gorgeous one; just the right temperature and sunny, with no wind. It soon became clear why sunglasses would be an important choice in North Africa fighting: we started to go blind

right away from staring at sunbaked sand. Where are those damn Rommel goggles?

The stars of this action were myself, the fabulous, ebullient and delightful Bob Gray and Matt Multi-sport Johns, otherwise known as Matt Splat. Bob was the evil Kraut, Matt the naughty, doughty Frenchies, while I moderated the action. We all stood, squatted or sat, as the situation required.

The rules remained unchanged, except for small concessions due to the lack of hexgrid. For our purposes, every 2" equaled one hex.

We began by sweeping the area (about 8' x 12') clear of major debris, then we put a large amount of sand through an old window screen to sift out the little crap. This left us with a large, smooth playing area, where none of the terrain would interfere with the glory of the playing pieces.

We used counters for guns and infantry, and GHQ miniatures for the German tanks and halftracks. This didn't look great, since the counters don't do much to enhance the otherwise very cool look of the Afrika Korps vehicles fanned out and driving across real sand.

The buildings the French were to hole up in were represented by a couple of appropriate flat-topped buildings made for use with tiny miniatures. As it turned out, the flat roofs were the perfect size for holding 1/2" counters. In retrospect, we decided we should have made little entrenchments out of glue and sand, but settled for pushing entrenched guys down in the sand a bit more.

As the sun moved across the late afternoon sky, shadows began to intrude on the playing area, and the glory of the paint jobs on my little AFVs revealed itself: they became damn near invisible. We played a little faster.

However, the scenario went great, in that it came down to the last turn. German luck was very good until the critical end-game, when OBA smoke turned up too late and the critical 9-2 infantry group broke. So the Free French hold at Bir Hakeim is unbroken.

(Fun facts to know and tell - there's a Bir Hakeim station in the Paris Metro.) And we managed to finish before dark.

Overall, we'd say that one needs to make some sort of arrangement for determining where hexes actually lie, since it matters quite a bit for rout, rally, DM, etc. With that in mind, there's no doubt that this sort of arrangement is best for a scenario like Sidi Bou Zid, where you can get a much more dramatic picture of the battle scene, and don't have to worry too much about hexes.

In addition to the threat of sunblindness, we also had to worry about accidentally burying some poor platoon of tanks with an errant foot. "Ach, vere is ze 3rd Troop?"

We decided that Sandbox ASL could benefit from a board covered with sand approach, as opposed to a real sandbox, where permanent death was all too possible for tiny tanks and counters. I do think there's still a Mk. IV turret in my back yard.

In a desert scenario, stuff like hillocks is easy to do, so one of our future plans is to do a Deluxe-sized, real sand game of Khamsin.

By the way, one more warning - don't drink water while you're playing Sandbox ASL. It's a real bummer when you spill it. Coagulating sand is not historical.

It's Cheesy But It Works

Norm Rodgers

Second in a series of articles concerning bad but workable ASL tactics.

This month:

The Truck attack

A good number of ASL scenarios feature unarmoured vehicles. Sometimes just a Jeep or Kubelwagon, it's not clear what these are for. In Tiger 222, the vehicles are actually Schwimmwagens, and they're for use on the river. But let's look at some other choices. How about Rout scenario X8, The Glory Road?

A look at the Japanese OB reveals no less than 5 trucks accompanying 3 tanks. A look at the SSR shows that all of the Japanese infantry will start loaded on these trucks, and they comprise enough men that each truck must be used.

But wait! SSR 2 says they can definitely dismount by Turn 2 at the latest, so here we have at least 4 turns remaining of the six and no apparent use for these fine vehicles. So what? you say. They have no armament, and surely you don't expect me to move my men forward through fire while still on board?

Before we explore our actual options, let's look at the VC, which have a special protection against The Truck Attack. The VC is detailed and ends "... In neither case may the Japanese have ≥ 3 destroyed/immobile trucks." Ahhh. We can't just use up all of these trucks. But barring a strange Gurkha infiltration to our side of the stream we're fighting over, we can safely run two trucks right down his throat.

That's right, these trucks might be extra-tough because they're Japanese, but in any case, a truck has certain value on the offensive. Let's do it.

This particular scenario has a limited amount of Gurkha firepower. Specifically one MMG, one LMG, one MTR, one ATR and a 2 pdr AT, plus seven squads and a crew. They have a front of about 10 hexes to cover, with three main areas the Japanese will likely cross: aiming for oM8, the bridge and oK2. The center area has the single bridge. That means the Gurkhas will have to spread out to cover the front.

Now given that the Japanese have 9 squads and three Chi-Ha tanks, we know he's got to be careful with his fire control. Even with his main strength around the bridge, he won't have too many shots to take at any one target. Especially early in the game, we can push things a bit with a truck attack.

A conventional attack would have a tank lead the way, hoping to survive the certain encounter with the Gurkha's 2 pdr near the bridge. Sometimes this works fine.

But you sure want to have those infantry dudes able to unload on Turn 1, don't you? And it sure would be nice to act historically and disrupt the entire defense on Turn 1, too, wouldn't it? Try this:

Make the first two vehicles trucks, the first the Type 97. These are the two you can afford to lose without jeopardizing the VC. The first truck has a single squad on board, the second, 1.5 squads. Not too much to risk.

The goal of the first truck is to make a go for hex J5. He has enough movement to get that far and unload. Based on the success of the first truck, the second moves a reasonable way forward before unloading.

In this scenario, we have the added benefit of the Japanese step reduction, which will allow a penetrating unit to stay Good Order against more fire. We also have the protection of heavy rain, which

will make the Gurkhas' fire less effective. This is critical for the truck attack, and one of the reasons why it works in this situation.

Since we've already pointed out the likely dispersion of the Gurkhas, let's see what happens when the big Type 97 gets to the British lines.

Well, one thing is the likely appearance of the British Wire counters. Can't help that. In this scenario, it might make a difference, since we want to keep the road open for the tanks. The trucks bog on a 7 or higher.

Barring problems with the fire or mines, we now find ourselves across the bridge and into the British lines.

The bad guys may have that MMG adjacent to the road. The AT is probably there. There are probably a couple of squads there. The goal is to have them either a) never take out the truck, thus letting it slip by into the rear area as planned or b) spend lots of fire on it, allowing the other units to move up safely.

The happy part is the rain. The +1 will greatly limit the chance that the truck will be KIA'd. And the best Gurkha leader is only -1, so he will only cancel the rain. To take out the truck, the Gurkhas will need a final 8 on the 16 table, a 7 on the 12, a 6 on the 8 and a 5 on the four. One higher will immobilize the truck, which is almost okay, too.

Note that if the truck is taken out, the infantry survive on a 7 or less, which is why we picked the big truck. CS is 6 or less with the Type 94.

Thus between the rain and the truck, we have a Japanese squad wailing into the heart of the defense at a net +1, since there's no FFMO or FFNAM. He probably won't make it untouched, but he'll draw lots of fire. And if the truck does actually make it, he'll be able to bring on the final indignity of the truck attack.

The final indignity is that trucks constitute enemy units, and as such can cut off rout paths. Once in the enemies rear in this scenario or any other, a truck becomes a problem all out of proportion to its inherent value. Resources will have to be devoted to taking out the truck, weaponless as it is, because it can kill broken units just by sitting around in LOS. Nasty.

Note that the truck cannot control territory or conduct overruns. If you do this you are beyond cheesy and could be punished.

Otherwise, you've just seen the glory of the truck attack. Making the defender spend his meagre assets taking out a cheap part of the attacker's OB. It's cheesy, but it works.

Next month: Fun tricks with mortars.

Tales from the Trench

Mssr Chardola du Rodgers

Jean-Pierre-Phillipe-Claude-Mickie studied the boots that were preceding him on the long trudge up the hill. The boots were charming, in their own way, though they were attached to the rookie just in front of him. The boots were so nice and new, still shiny beneath a fine layer of clay and the dust from the rocksalt crunching, crunching underfoot with every slow step up the long hill.

Jean-Mickie looked up, breaking his hypnotic reverie. Maybe he could find a way to sneak those boots into his pack if the rookie bought it. Rookies were forever getting their tickets punched in this platoon. He didn't know why.

The trail lead to a ridge, finally leveling off, punctuated with hardwood trees, a few pines and the undersized palm trees native to this portion of France. "Get your asses dug in," the sergeant barked

hoarsely. None of the soldiers had had a drop to drink in 30 minutes, and they were beginning to dehydrate.

Jean-Mickie shrugged off his pack, the aluminum frame glinting through the black electrical tape Jean had used to hide just such reflections. Cursing himself, Jean rubbed some mud and rocksalt onto the pack, covering the shine. He drew out and unfolded his standard issue shovel, careful to avoid the serrated edge.

That sharp, wicked edge took him back to his cross-training at Camp LaJeune in the United States. He had been instructed by Gurkha drill sergeants on loan to the US from the British Army on how to wield the deadly shovels in close quarters combat.

The Gurkhas kept after their foreign charges, telling the foreign exchange soldiers how they must consider the combat shovels as their kukri. Jean-Mickie would do his duty when the time came.

An enemy sniper opened up from a distance. The French platoon dug in with more determination, fighting against the rocksalt that spilled back into the trench they were trying to dig.

The rookie beside Jean-Mickie sighed as a Mauser round whistled through his chest, impacting in the palm tree just behind - the crack of the rifle following shortly after.

Jean cursed the enemy as he quickly removed the boots from his dead *gen-de-les-arm*. With rigor mortis fully set in, it wasn't easy getting the boots off, but he managed beautifully, sweating profusely under the hot, turmeric sun.

But the beautiful new boots were too small for Jean, and the *debacle-de-guerre* was complete, misery peeking its fugly head out and giving poor Jean the proverbial raspberries.

As if to prove that fate had more black surprises this day, a German company, (maybe a platoon really, but with some of them yelling really loud so as to sound like more guys) emerged from the trees at one end of the ridgeline, running toward the French position.

In reaction, the French sergeant, with a flare for the dramatic, drew his Japanese sword (captured from a dead exchange officer). "Forward, you yellow Limey bastards" he cried, which just really confused the platoon since he said it in English with a sort of Australian lilt.

Understanding his sergeant's actions if not his words, Jean threw down his rifle and brandished his assault shovel, running out toward the enemy. He held the shovel out in front, tip down, both hands on the stainless steel handle, the blade flat and parallel to his chest.

He ran with the confidence that the blade would deflect stray bullets, which it did time and again with a viscous "clang" and "prewannnnngle".

His sergeant, attacking with nothing but insane moxy and a captured sword, fell to the rounds now pouring from the line of running Germans, and he lay very still. Then he stood suddenly and ran away from the fight, running as far and fast as he could in the general direction of *Le Ligne de Maginot*.

Jean-Mickie ran on, sweat beading up on his forehead and tracing a torturous path down his nose, down over his lips and chin and down his chest, soaking finally into his fatigues, no longer the bright blue but rather a strange darker blue.

He looked up through a veritable cloudburst of his own sweat and saw that the German charge had ground to a halt as some had stopped to reload, and others were urinating on their Mausers, lugers and P-35 grenade launchers, trying to free them of the clogging rocksalt. Jean-Mickie passed through their lines, slashing and hacking as he ran, not really hitting anything, but putting in a terrific show.

He stumbled, landing on his leg at a funny angle and tearing his anterior crucial ligament. He landed in a foxhole, and passed out as

friendly 92.5cm mortar rounds began to find the hill, billowing up huge clouds of rocksalt.

Jean-Mick awoke several hours later, refreshed by his nap. He brushed away the layer of rocksalt and palm fronds that coated his tired uniform, and turned his attention to what he would have for dinner that night, if he could ever find his most confused platoon.

The Killer Elite

Rick Troha (w/ Kurt)

There have been hundreds of scenarios created and printed for use in ASL. Some of them are just ok, others suck. Likewise, their designers are sometimes genius on earth, and sometimes just not with the program.

Below is a probably-correct listing of some of the most interesting and popular scenarios published over the years. Note that these are from the AH list, and don't include the gems from sources such as the Rout, Critical Hit, etc.

The list really shorts the Euro types, so don't consider it all-inclusive, just informative.

If there were ever a list that showed the designer for every scenario, you'd see that every Warsaw scenario belonged to Rex Martin, just about every Finn scenario to him or me, most of the para and glider scenarios to Steve Swann, etc.

Also, you should check out the ones with Pat Jonke's name on them. That's a good list.

Across the Wire	Pedro Ramis
Acts of Defiance	Pete Mudge
Age-Old Foes	Brian Martuzas
Bone of Contention	Rex Martin
Bridge to Nowhere	Eugene Murell
The Bushmasters	Rex Martin
Clash Along the Psel	Bruce Bakken
Cold Crocodiles	Pat Jonke
End of the Ninth	Pat Jonke
The Eastern Gate	Brian Martuzas
Hill 253.5	Bob McNamara
Italian Brothers	Eric Baker
Jungle Citadel	Brian Martuzas
Khamsin	Eugene Murell
Le Herisson	Bill Sisler
Mailed Fist	Kurt Martin
Munda Mash	Chaney & McGrath
On the Kokoda Trail	Rex Martin
The Professionals	Rex Martin
Rockets Red Glare	Jon Mishcon
Showdown at Tug Argan Pass	Robert Banozic
Smith & Weston	Rick Troha
Totsugeki	Chaney & McGrath
Tussle at Thomashof	Dan Dolan
Valhalla Bound	Pete Mudge
White Tigers	Pat Jonke

Kraut Krap

Dear Mr. Kraut:

I have a German Model 36 helmet, but I don't see the two rivets where I see them in the photos in my books on standard uniforms. Could I have fallen victim to a cheap imitation?

Worried in Williamsburg

Dear Worried:

Please check for the Manufacturer stamp on the underside of the steel pot. If you have a small engraving there that looks like a giant Teutonic Champion stomping on a British chicken, you can be assured that you have the genuine article, regardless of the photos. The Wehrmacht had many ways of arming its mighty men, and sometimes the minor variants can be worrisome. Thanks for your letter.

Dear Mr. Kraut:

I was recently re-leafing through some of my files on the Hitler Youth when it struck me that many of the fine young men pictured were under 5 five feet tall and 100 pounds. While I'm sure that this is more likely due to their youth than malnutrition, the thought struck me that their rifles were longer than they were tall and their load heavier than their weight. I also noticed that some of them seemed underdressed for the weather conditions, as evidenced by snow in the background, etc. What's this about?

Concerned in Cleveland

Dear Concerned:

Rest assured that your concerns are like nothing to the Hitler Youth. They do not need your concern, nor do your concerns concern them. They are Hitler Youth and their load, their clothes, their age and the weather does not concern them. Lunch does not concern them! The enemy does not concern them! They are Hitler Youth! Their rifles do not concern them, as long as they have a bayonet! Their bayonets do not concern them, as long as they have a grenade! Grenades do not even concern them, as long as they have hands with which to choke ze life from ze Bolshevik horde!

Anyway, don't be concerned. They didn't suffer long.

Some Stuff about Knight's Move and The Cemetery

David Lambkin

Knight's Move was created and is based on an interesting Special Forces action of World War II. It is one in which Nazi Commandos attempted to kill or capture the supreme leader of the largest guerilla movement in Europe (with the exception of the Soviet Union, of course).

There were other German attempts (some of which succeeded) during the war to seize national leaders: the Dutch Royal family in 1940; Hungary's Admiral Horthy in the spring of 44; the ill-fated and controversial Operation Eagle, to get Churchill in the fall of 43; the greatly-botched attempt to take out the Big Three at the Teheran conference, also that fall; and the overpublicized rescue of Mussolini by Skorzeny and a handful of paratroopers.

But those typically depended on a small picked force using stealth and surprise, then a lightning fast attack to get the job done.

In this case, the Germans set aside most of the stuff about sneaking around, and although security was heavy for the mission, they decided to use a fast but huge force to go after the target. A major offensive for an entire theatre of the war would be focused on eliminating one man.

It was a fairly impressive gamble. Some of this size can be explained by the large units that constantly surrounded Tito, engaged as he was in a bitter and sneaky struggle on a daily basis. A small group of commandos would not quietly infiltrate the area, seize or kill then try to escape, but rather a reinforced battalion would land by parachute and glider.

The scenario is a fairly careful treatment of the actual attack on Tito's command cave. Since the Germans did take the area during the course of the battle, the details of the assault and the terrain are clear, and are represented by the SSR, OB's, etc.

Partisans

The Partisan OB is unusual for them (all partisans should be this well off!). They defend a cave placed in the heart of the hill on board 25. This hill is hard enough to negotiate for the defender, let alone the attacker. The defenders may not be able to move around much, but they'll always have at least Height Advantage on their side.

Added to this terrain are the fortifications that make a difficult approach almost silly for the Germans. These fortifications include Bunkers, Trenches, Foxholes, and Wire.

Furthermore, the partisans are supplied with British machine guns, an Italian 81mm Mortar, and a few 50mm Mortars. Other partisan benefits include a captured Italian tank, Concealment `?', a 9-2 leader, and most importantly - Fanaticism.

Advantages - Numbers, terrain, ordnance

Disadvantages - Range

Their disadvantages lie in the fact that due to their range the bulk of their squads inherent firepower will remain dormant (forcing them to rely upon the MG's & MTR's) until the Germans get uncomfortably close.

Indeed, while the reinforcing force represents a nice packet of firepower, it can't do much until the Germans have jumped onto the hill. And rallying will certainly be a problem since routing to a leader will be hampered by the defender's terrain.

Germans

Advantages - Leadership, range, initiative

Yes, the Krauts have killer leadership this time out, and they'll need it. Just prying the bad guys out of their many entrenchments will require the attention of some of the negative modifier leaders, while others will be needed to get lucky and help squads get lucky moving toward the hill.

Fortunately, the Germans can concentrate at first on taking out the ordnance and big MG's, the only weapons the partisans have that can reach out onto board 18. And counting the hexes the Germans need to cross suggests that when they get into the range of the partisan squads they might be able to move slower, if things have gone okay earlier.

A flanking move might help concentrate the attack in an area where the local defense can be subdued, thus letting the Germans get up the hill less abused.

Disadvantages - The approach

The bulk of the German force has to cross board 18 in order to reach the hill on board 25. There is very little cover for the Germans to use as they cross this board. Due to the time limit they must move quickly relying on gullies, the limited cover provided by the hills and the few buildings, and trusting to a little luck when moving across open ground.

There is no guarantee for any particular unit, as the partisans have the FP and the leadership to kill in just about any hex.

Fortunately, high SS morale, range factors for the defender's SW should help a little. Attackers beware: playtests have frequently found cocky SS squads & leaders getting removed from play after they attempt to move across OG and are hit by long range HMG fire directed by a 9-2, or 8-1 leader. Even, 50mm MTR fire can be quite lethal in OG.

The game usually finds at least a partially depleted SS force reaching the base of the hill. At this point the difficulties increase as the SS must attack up hill against a largely intact, entrenched enemy. After this, the intensity of fighting should deplete both sides OB as the surviving SS struggle to reach the cave's entry hex, and if unable Control it, at least attempt to destroy it with DC or PF.

It all makes for a dramatic and intense scenario that is surely not for the faint of heart.

The Cemetery

David Lambkin

A fight to the death in a graveyard between two bitter antagonists seemed appropriate for the Balkans. As far as I know, no scenarios have ever focused on this cemetery, and it all makes a good sequel to Knight's Move.

The action picks up where Knight's Move leaves off, later that night in the town of Drvar. The Germans have failed to take out Tito, have successfully disengaged from the fighting at The Citadel and have fallen back to Drvar where they have rallied in the cemetery. They hope to hold out through the night and be relieved in the morning.

In the meantime, powerful partisan forces, bent on revenge, look to crush them before help arrives.

Board 21 is perfect for this situation - with a couple of overlays it looks and feels about right: a cemetery with a wall surrounding it, set in the middle of the board with streets on all sides.

There's not so much to say here - it's pretty cut and dried. The German remnants are hard-pressed, in that they don't have too many squads for such a long wall.

Partisans

Advantages - Numbers, initiative, stealth, low NVR

The partisans have the usual night advantages of outnumbering the defender and being able to pick the fight. The joys of cloaking help make their intentions unknown to the German, who in this case needs to make something of a defense in every direction, at least until the partisans reveal their goals.

With this in mind, a quick but careful approach is in order. There aren't any turns available for probing or sitting around, and the partisans best chances are early, when his cloaking and concealment are intact. No move counters are also a key to early play.

Stealth is always a major factor at night, where ambush rolls for the attacker need only be 2 lower.

Disadvantages - Firepower

There's no question the Germans have an edge in straight up CC and PBF. This is critical for defending the wall as units approach and after the partisans cross. The partisans can't dish it out anywhere like they can in CC, where Stealth should help them even the odds.

Germans

Advantages - Concentration, terrain

The German can make a tidy defense here, although never with a nice complete line. He can fall back to the center building or try to hold the wall throughout the game. With concealment, this gives him a bit of initiative once he loses his No Move status.

Disadvantages - Clumsiness

Partisan stealth is deadly, as Hand to Hand can only be a joy for the partisans. With almost a two to one advantage in squads, they can through 1 to 2 HTH attacks in while other units encircle and move up concealed/cloaked.

If the German is clumsy in flare and ambush rolls, it will be a short night. The Germans are likely to get swamped more often than the partisans are to be ripped up by fire.

The most important and useful reason for taking the western orchard is: by moving carefully and attacking only along the western side of the map, the partisans can concentrate their striking power against a small portion of the German line while leaving the bulk of the German force (in the Graveyard) immobile and virtually inactive (due to rule E1.21 - because they are unable to see a Known Enemy Unit) until you are ready to deal with them.

The partisan player should leave at least some units in reserve along the rest of the perimeter in order to deny Rout Direction to the enemy retreating from the orchard and cemetery. Keep them concealed until this time, unless you wish to activate all those immobile Germans in the cemetery and have them counterattack and throw you back out of the orchard.

The key to the German defense is holding building oM5 and getting troops mobile as soon as possible. If the partisans attack the cemetery first, slowly fall back to the buildings and orchard always being careful of being cut off and prevented from routing.

Of course, this is one of those scenarios where a lot of counters leave the board because of monster CC, so it's hard for the German to feel hopeful towards the end. Just check that VC - any living MMC in the cemetery can win it.

How to Play: Setting The Woods On Fire

Kurt Martin

I am attracted to ASL by many facets of the game, but one of the strongest calls has to be the sense of drama. I hate scenarios that have no heart. And I love the ones that have the right feel to them. So it's no surprise that the plight of the British paras at Arnhem is one of my favorite themes. Here are some mighty tough guys who just can't buy a break, but keep trying anyway.

There have been a number of scenarios about these guys, but I think this one catches them in a fairly representative action: a difficult, expensive attack against frustrating circumstances. North Bank is good for showing them cornered (although nothing like Third Bridge), but this action shows the paras on the attack in solid strength.

This is a very historical scenario, in that plenty of detail is available on the exact units and movements during this period, and the physical terrain is also well-known. Some of the playtesters for Woods are actually local Dutchmen, so we have reassurance for once that the feel is right.

I'm fond of actions that use lots of woods, in that they tend to foster more mystery, and the random entry portion of the SSR tends to keep both sides wondering.

Paras

Advantages: Morale, Numbers, Leadership, Initiative

The Brit OB is pretty intimidating, including as it does a solid majority of elite squads, lots of leadership and plenty of dummy counters. There's no heavy firepower, but the Piat and a 6 pdr AT help round out their attack. A spare Jeep helps with recon and delaying actions, and the mortars give a shot at some smoke.

Perhaps most importantly, this force starts out in a neat bunch, allowing the player to create an attack of his own liking. The dummy counters allow him to move across the board without completely revealing his strategy.

Disadvantages: Woods, Surprise entry

It's a crotch-rot of a march for Tommy, with lots of woods to move through. He can take the roads, but those are the easiest thing for Jerry to defend. And those Jerries tend to pop up from every direction, making a pot-mess of any particular plan. A straight line from the British setup area to the closest exit hex is about 24 hexes long, so Prep Fire is a troublesome thing.

German

Advantages: AFV, Time, VC

Though none of them will win the war, those German AFV can make the British day a long one. A concerted British attack against them will certainly leave behind a wreck, but that much time and firepower will be required.

And time is a major enemy for the British, since the woods exit requires a healthy number of MF in those last turns. Any time they can be forced to Assault Move or Prep Fire the German wins a little bit. And take a look at those VC: the British will have to exit about half of their force before game end, making every SMC loss/wound, casualty reduction and Melee a little win for the Germans. Over nine turns, the percentage of surviving units that have to exit will keep going up.

Disadvantages: Dispersion, Quality

Of course, it's hard for the German to get excited about his force. As in real life, the German has a hodge-podge of troops scattered all over the place. They show up where he doesn't need or want them, and they aren't as good as the opponent. Worst of all, they are never in sufficient numbers to really make a good fight of it.

Part of the challenge for the German is to consolidate a real defense while maintaining a steady delaying action. A piecemeal defense can be rolled up by the Brits at little cost, but a real solid line near the exit area can force Tommy to take a lot of chances near game end, with those chances adding up to additional losses he can ill afford.

Starting Out

The first two turns will do much to set the tone in this game, as the Germans have a few good squads and lots of concealment with which to try to establish an annoying defense. Two thirds of the time the Turn 1 Germans will enter right behind the Brits, which allows them a chance to leave an effective rear guard.

In any case, two important locations in the early game are the clearing around 34Q10 and the bridge at 32S6. These are likely places for the German to first challenge the British advance, since the LOS is a little more free. Also, the British (and probably two German) vehicles will need to use the clearing if they are to move to board 34 in decent time.

The later stages of the game usually see the German striving to construct a more robust defense, often centered on the board 34 stream and the single bridge over it. While better for a real defense, the British have no problem doubling around it, and always seem to be able to bring strength to bear when and where they need it, so there won't be a stable defensive line in this one.

Replay value is increased by the options the British player has in handling his force (i.e. leaving delaying forces behind, sending units forward, etc.) as well as the random German arrivals. Likewise, the German can try to throw each unit he has at the British as it arrives or try to husband them in hopes of creating a bigger force to fight it out closer to the end.

I hope you enjoy this one - I still like it.

How to Play: Soldiers of Construction

Kurt Martin

Now here's a scenario with some new stuff - SeaBees, bulldozers and Clearance rolls. Gotta love those guys that know how to work Heavy Machinery during a fight. Of course, you have to give those Japanese credit for fighting to the last, even when the new airport's coming in for sure. The first anti-development protesters.

Since it didn't take up much of the page, we went ahead and explained the SSR for Clearance a bit more than usual. That's the only tricky thing about playing this one, as all revolves around the SeeBees' ability to get that runway clear.

Japanese

Advantages: Morale, Quality, Initiative

Strange as it seems, the Japanese are the better troops in this one with second line dudes. A quick check of the back of the counter gives a hint of this: the Japanese squads are worth 10 BVP in DYO, the Americans, 4. By that measure, the Japanese muster 70 MMC points at start to the American 44.

And there's that morale discrepancy, and the fact that the Americans don't really have a whole lot of terrain to defend. I like the odds of 7 of these Japanese against 11 of those bad guys. And the Japanese get to pick the fight, choosing which area of the airfield to go after, if not all.

Disadvantages: Being Japanese

The Japanese just can't hang in a fight for long, and with 11 squads shooting at them as they attack over open ground, they are sure to have survival problems. Step reduction and casualty reduction are serious matters for second line Japanese, and their ELR is nothing to cheer, either. Those seven squads can become pretty worthless in no time, and the leaders have the usual tendency to evaporate, as well. But with no requirement to be alive at the end, and only six turns to go, how tough can it be?

American

Advantages: Tankdozer, numbers

Like ants, there are plenty of SeaBees to go around. Which is good, since they are not real good fighters. And since they don't have much of anywhere to hide or much firepower, they need to be plentiful.

Now that tankdozer, that looks pretty awesome in this crowd. Anyone who comes after it better be carrying that DC, and they better be lucky, what with all that open ground to cover. In fact, the game can revolve around the DC and tankdozer, if the two players want to do it that way. Regardless of the DC, the tankdozer is key, since it's likely to be the last moving dozer in the game.

Disadvantages: VC, Quality

The Victory Conditions are not going to make the American happy as the game progresses. What with fighting the Japanese and all, clearing a runway is not going to be easy. The clearance DR won't be too tough, but either one of the runways will require several clearances, including a couple near the woodline the Japanese are issuing from.

Worst of all, it's not easy to rally the SeaBees once they're down. Rally terrain is not easy to come by, and the leadership is sparse. But what loss is a 3-3-6? There are lots of them, anyway.

Starting Out

Turn One is a killer. The Japanese set the tone with their appearance on board 38. They can actually lose the game instantly by running too fast, but the American will have fits trying to really stop a careful advance.

Also on this turn comes the arrival of the tankdozer and another 50 guys with tape measures. They can also pick their avenue of approach, hopefully leading to domination of the battlefield. Certainly, the infantry has to stay with the tank to protect the biggest asset in the game. If he's lucky, the American can doze and kill with the tank, making it the scenario winner.

If the DC can't dispatch the tank, at least the Japanese can capture then defend the runway hexes that have to be cleared, and thus the runway itself is often the scene of the wildest fighting, as it was 50 years ago. Along the way they can easily kill squads and the other dozers, making this one of those scenarios that ends with a small percentage of the counters it started with.

How to Play: Men of Stone

Kurt Martin

It's clear what I wanted from this scenario - the Japanese on the attack against the Americans, late in the war. I also wanted to get back into that Tournament Scenario zone, where the counter mix is small and the possibilities large. With that in mind, it's no surprise that this was a very popular scenario at Oktoberfest 1995.

Of course, if there's any theme to this issue of the Rout, it's Okinawa/futility, and this scenario has both of those. No matter how big the Japanese win here, there was no hope for a true victory. And plenty of them will get mown down in open ground.

I think the boards limit the ultimate replay value of this one, but I've played it several times to different effect each time. One of the interesting facets is the American's ability to choose the area of resistance - forward for negatively modified fire or maybe back around the hills for better security.

Japanese

Advantages: Morale, LV, 10-2

The mud is cruel, as it keeps the Japanese from closing too quickly. Without it, the Americans would be dead before the sun came up all the way. As it stands, that 8 morale and Mr. 10-2 in the lead make for a scary force to have heading straight at you.

Unlike most Japanese, these guys running through the dawn's early light make tough targets, and sometimes the Yanks won't be able to dent them until they're close enough to shoot back.

Of course, once up close the Japanese can declare Banzai and close the remaining distance in a heartbeat. Spooky if they haven't been whittled down before then.

Disadvantages: Distance

Besides the obviously limited time, the Japanese just have a lot of hexes to cover in 6 movement phases. They have to make the most of Advancing Fire and Defensive Fire, because Prep won't be a good idea. The loss of a couple of leaders can be critical, due to the need for their extra MF. In short, they're vulnerable to any sort of delay.

American

Advantages: Firepower, terrain

It doesn't take a brain surgeon to see what the Americans need to do here. Any spanking they can do to the Japanese while they're far away is good, and they can start hurting the Nips on Turn 1, long

before the good guys can do anything much to return fire. With a little luck, the American can make the end game fight an easy one by whittling the Japs down to size before they even enter board 18.

And board 18 can be a good place to defend, with everyone on a hill getting height advantage, and lots of options for reverse slope defending in safety. And since the Japanese have a low SAN for once, the tank can dish out lots of FP in relative CE safety.

Disadvantages: Morale, Overcast

A little rain can go a long way in this one, and it happens often enough. Worse yet, those Jap mortars can drop smoke if it doesn't rain, and the Americans have a very countable number of units. Two smoke rounds can really open things up.

A force based on a morale of 6 is always vulnerable, and even the relatively puny firepower of the Japanese squads can wink out an NMC or two. Just a few of these will open the way toward heaven for the good guys.

Starting Out

The Japanese can start out by running, just to test the American's fire control, nerve and luck. As long as the 10-2, mortars and DC move forward, all is well. A few step reductions are insignificant. The Japanese player just needs to keep a careful count of MF required to close with the enemy, and stay CX as much as possible in the early going to make hay while the LV is on.

A fire group with the 10-2 is tempting, but will it yield more than it costs? The Americans are served by Japanese stacks and unnerved by dispersion, but breaking the MG and MTR Yanks would be a good thing. If the INF gun finds the range, look for Captain Ito to be eating C rations for lunch. One of the things I like to see is the gun doing the Olympics thing with a couple of MMC pushing it forward while the hindrances are up. With a little luck, this can have it dealing out special ammo late in the game with acceptable TH numbers.

The tank has a tough time moving around, and a Mud Bog would be cruel indeed. More importantly, its guns have to be in action every Jap Movement Phase. Look for a forward home and hope for the best.

Placement of the American leaders is also critical. There are only two. With only seven squads, rallying toward the end of the game will be decisive.

Unfortunately, the best rally terrain, the woods, is in the front line or well behind the victory area. The reverse slope may be the safest place at the end of the day, especially if the tank can join them there in preparation for a last-minute charge onto the hill for the win.